Long-Range
Planning
For
Utah Public
Libraries

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Introduction

Since the implementation of the UPGRADE Standards in the 1980's, Utah public libraries have been submitting annual service and program plans together with evaluation reports on the previous year's accomplishments to the State Library Division. Preparing planning and evaluation documents encourage library directors and boards to think seriously about ways of improving their collections, services, and programs to meet the ever changing information needs of their patrons.

The UPGRADE PROCESS outlined an eight-step planning program that libraries could follow. Refer to the companion publication, *Standards for Utah Public Libraries*, pp. 24-25. This planning guide serves as a basic management tool for the library director, board, and staff to help them identify areas for improvement that could be accomplished realistically within one year. Certified public libraries submit their plans and evaluations to the State Library Division in the fall of each year.

As an additional incentive to help library directors and boards in this planning process, the State Library Division secured annual state appropriations to reward those libraries that had met the UPGRADE standards and actively planned for improvements each year. All certified public libraries, regardless of size, receive a Public Library Development Grant each year to spend on a variety of uses to enhance services. Grant funds can be spent on staff continuing education and professional development opportunities; targeted collection development; computer technology; adult or children's programming; equipment, furniture, or shelving; minor remodeling for more efficient service for disabled access, and for planning and evaluation activities.

The impact of information technology on library services exploded in the1990's with the growth of the Internet, electronic resources, and the proliferation of the personal computer in all areas of the public's lives. Two federal grant opportunities helped reduce the library's costs for telecommunications infrastructure.

1) The FCC E-Rate discount program enabled many libraries to pay for expensive improvements in information technology and telecommunications systems and

2) The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) competitive grant program provided additional funds for libraries to purchase, upgrade and/or replace outdated computers, inadequate servers, automation, application, and security software.

Both these programs have been responsible for keeping libraries connected to 21st Century technology and insured equitable access for everyone. Both programs also required libraries to develop three-year technology plans. Because these were long-range plans, libraries quickly learned to forecast their technology needs based on current patron demand for Internet access,

e-mail, automation, and electronic databases. Librarians became adept at estimating their future technology needs and planned for systematic updating of their technology by rotating out older computers for email, word processing or other software applications, dedicating older servers for administrative purposes and newer ones for web access. Within a few years, many libraries developed excellent long-range technology plans.

It just made sense to expect libraries to develop the same comprehensive long-range plan for their other programs and services. Over the course of a year, Library Development staff prepared a series of articles fo*r DIRECTIONS for Utah Libraries* on long-range planning to help directors and board members grasp the usefulness of expanding their annual planning documents and folding in the library's three-year technology plan. These articles have been reprinted in this publication along with a long-range planning template (Appendix A) that libraries could use to prepare their new plans. Libraries are strongly encouraged to try to develop a long-range plan for submission to the State Library Division beginning in the fall of 2003 or as soon as possible thereafter.

The State Library Division will post examples of long-range plans that libraries submit over the course of the next few years to its website at http://library.utah.gov/longrangeplan.html. Libraries are encouraged to refer to these examples and adapt formats which work for them as they develop their own long-range plans. There is no one right way to do this; each library will prepare its own unique long-range plan depending on its goals, objectives, and needs of the community.

Long-Range Library Planning: The Road Ahead

Just as people who rely on maps to reach an unknown destination are more assured of actually getting there, so too are libraries that plan for the future more likely to reach their goals and objectives. A major goal for Library Development is to help libraries expand their one-year planning documents into three-year plans. At the same time, libraries are asked to integrate their three-year technology plans into this long-range planning document.

A second goal of Library Development is to equip library planning participants with adequate skills so that planning becomes a regular activity of every board meeting. A final goal is to provide libraries with a planning template to help them organize and frame their goals and objectives over a three-year period. *DIRECTIONS* featured various aspects of library planning to help librarians, staff, trustees, community participants, and local governing representatives develop effective long-range plans. These planning articles and the planning template (Appendix A) included here are also posted on the State Library Division's website at http://library.utah.gov/longrangeplan.html along with selected long-range plans from Utah public libraries.

The State Library hopes that public libraries will develop long-range plans as soon as possible. It may take a few years before they become as adept in preparing long-range plans for all their services, programs, and activities as they have with their three-year technology plans. The long-range planning process should become easier each time.

What follows is a discussion of why libraries need to plan, why they need to plan more than one year out, whom they need to involve in the process, and the importance of evaluation methods that determine successful plans.

What Is A Library Plan?

- It is a road map or a series of directions to get from one place to another, and hopefully a better place.
- It is a logical process that leads to change or improvement.
- It helps groups and individuals make better-informed decisions that result in responsible and productive actions.
- It increases the effectiveness of the organization and assures that the stated goals and objectives will be reached.
- It requires future-oriented thinking, i.e., what do we want to happen, provide, change in library facilities, services, technology, etc.?

Why Should Libraries Plan?

- Planning demonstrates to the public that the director, staff, and board regularly review the library's collections, services, programs, and policies and make necessary changes and improvements along the way.
- Planning prioritizes library goals and objectives in terms of importance, determines the order and timetable in which they will be accomplished, and reflects a continuity of purpose.
- Planning insures that the participants examine alternative paths and come to a group agreement on which choices are "best" for the patrons and the library. The examination of all choices eliminates "dead ends," expensive and unsupportable decisions, and other barriers to progress.
- Planning provides accountability to local governing authorities and the public and guarantees that the director, staff, and board are carrying out their assigned duties and not wasting time or money.

Why Should Libraries Plan Long-Range?

- Long-range planning forces the director, staff, board, and public to think beyond a limited time frame in anticipating future information needs, trends, collection formats, services, and technology access.
- Long-range planning enables the participants to design, shape, and control changes for the library instead of reacting haphazardly to external pressures and circumstances.
- Long-range planning is flexible and can adjust to changing service needs, reading, viewing, listening tastes, and new and evolving information technology.
- Long-range planning is a dynamic, on-going process that should be evaluated at designated intervals.

It is important for all planning participants to realize that there is no one-size fits all long-range plan for libraries. Each library, each community is unique and will adopt different roles, set different goals and objectives to achieve, and write totally distinctive mission statements that reflect what their patrons want the library to provide. While most public libraries provide popular print and non-print materials, offer access to the Internet, and conduct story times and summer reading programs for children, others may concentrate their resources on developing and expanding local history collections, delivering outreach services to underserved ethnic minorities, providing online training to patrons, or supporting adult programming and celebrity book readings.

Finally, libraries should limit their planning to no more than three years. Longer range plans like the infamous Soviet Five-Year economic plans are doomed because no one group can possibly foresee all the new events and circumstances that erupt to change or torpedo the best laid plans. It is even difficult to guarantee that a library will accomplish what it intends to do in

year two and three of a three-year plan. But somehow, when the planning participants put down on paper the goals and objectives that the library hopes to accomplish over a three-year period, they commit themselves to making it happen. Without any plan, a library will stand still or even worse regress in meeting the needs of its patrons.

Who Should Be Involved?

The current scene: Most Utah public libraries have been accustomed to one of two ways of planning for their services and programs. In one scenario, the director and staff identify the improvements to be made to services, programs, resources, or the facility. These changes reflect their observations, patron requests or expectations, and/or perceived information needs of the community for the next year. The director then makes recommendations to the board for consideration and adoption of these changes as goals and objectives for the coming year. The director and staff identify the tasks to be accomplished, include a timeline for each to be completed, and devise an evaluation procedure to be followed at the end of the year.

In the second and more effective scenario, the board sets up an active planning committee to conduct a community needs assessment and from the results, determines the goals, objectives, and activities that the director and staff implement in the coming year. The reality is somewhere between the two scenarios.   In both cases the process begins anew each year as the planning participants identify new goals and objectives and develop strategies to carry out the plan.

Identifying future needs: While both annual and long-range planning are cyclical processes, the latter requires more creativity and risk taking by persons unafraid of thinking outside the box. Planning two to three years down the road necessitates that the participants anticipate new trends in information services and technology, collection formats, and facility needs, such as a new roof, carpeting, plumbing, heating, and electrical improvements. They must also be in tune with changing demographics in their community as new patron groups, defined by younger or older age levels, growing ethnic minorities, or different socioeconomic classes increase. If the character of the community is changing, then the planning participants will need to adjust priorities in collections, services, and programs that respond to these new demands.

Long-range planning does not happen overnight. It should be a deliberate activity conducted by the library director, staff, board, and community participants over a period of years. When a major change or improvement is needed, establishing a special planning committee is recommended. Major changes may include planning for a new or remodeled building or creating a new political arrangement, such as combining city libraries into a countywide system.

All planning participants need to understand the library's current objectives and mission statement. This is especially true for members of a special planning committee who are selected for their particular expertise and may not be familiar with library services and operations. Library planning participants may represent members of the broader community,

particularly special interest organizations that need the library's resources to promote their own goals. Examples of these groups are local literacy or ESL (English as a second language) organizations that may be housed within the library. Other groups might be senior associations or local service organization.

The library's internal environment:
- People with the most significant investment in library services, programs, and resources are members of the internal organization, namely the director and employees and especially the public service staff. These dedicated frontline people are more aware of what patrons expect. They hear daily about what the library is not doing or could be doing better or differently.
- Volunteers from the Friends group, literacy organizations, children or adult programming services or Internet trainers are next in line. Though their service focus is much narrower, they are fairly well acquainted with library operations and services, but less with overall resources or other programs.
- The broader organizations consist of the board members and local government liaisons that may or may not be regular library users and who mainly come together for what should be important, but infrequent meetings. It is up to the director and staff to keep these very important people informed about how well the library is accomplishing its goals.

The library's external environment:
- The purpose of new services or programs being considered will dictate the kinds of people asked to participate in the library's long-range plan.
- People with indirect ties to the library, but with appropriate expertise in organizational and communication skills, fund raising experience, and public relations savvy should be recruited from the broader community to serve on a library planning committee. These people may represent community organizations, educational institutions, be regular users of the library and even non-users if they are willing to participate. They should be able to commit at least three years to insure continuity in planning for the library's new programs and services.
- It is useful to assign people from a variety of internal and external sources to get the best mix and the brightest minds. A balance of leaders to workers is also an important consideration as well as limiting the number of committee members to a manageable size. Too many members can inhibit communication and the exchange of ideas. Finally, all members need to keep in mind the library's mission to provide patrons with the opportunities, resources, and programs that they want, not what the planning committee thinks the patrons need and should have.

A New Planning Paradigm:
Outcomes-Based Program Design

There is a new planning/evaluation methodology that government agencies and organizations are being asked to adopt for some of their programs to provide greater public accountability. Public libraries are strongly encouraged to develop long-range plans that measure the results of at least one program using this method. It is one thing to plan library programs, but quite another to plan them with meaningful results that change people's attitudes, skills, knowledge, behavior, or condition. Participants who follow this results-oriented approach to one particular library program will discover that, although it may require more time, energy, and resources, it can lead to more focused and successful programs and services. Once an initial program has been designed and implemented in this fashion, the methodology can be applied to other library programs. And in the course of a few years, most of the significant programs will be measurable in terms of patron benefits.

Measuring The Effectiveness Of Library Programs And Services

First of all, planning participants need to understand that a library program is a series of activities and services that produce outcomes or results that usually have a definite beginning and an end. Programs are designed to change target audience attitudes, behaviors, or knowledge or to increase skills and abilities based on an assumed need. The purpose of the library program is defined in terms of "what" it is intended to accomplish; "for whom" it is targeted; and "for what outcome or benefit for that target audience"

Important Concepts And New Terms

- First decide what **Outcomes**, or benefits that the patrons receive from the program, will be measured.
- Identify the **Inputs** or materials/resources that are needed to accomplish the activities and services of the program.
- Determine the **Activities**/managerial/administrative functions which will support delivery of services to program participants.
- Develop the **Services** or parts of the program that involve the program participants and produce the outcomes.
- Design the **Outputs** or measurements (number/quantity) of the activities and services generated by the program.

If this results-based approach is applied to a library program, then the planning participants will be able to write a final report that answers the questions:
- We wanted to do what?
- We did what?
- So what? Or what difference did it make to the patrons?
- Of what benefit was this program?

Being able to measure patron benefits of a library program or service is substantially more meaningful than former methods of program evaluation that produced vague, inconsistent,

unreliable data and subjective assessment. Outcomes-based program design and evaluation is not simple to grasp in the beginning. But with practice, planning participants will be able to design more effective library programs.

Preliminary Steps To
Long-Range Library Planning

A closer look. Successful planning is an on-going process that has no beginning and no end. However, when a library board decides it is time to take a closer look at the library's services, functions, and public image, it's best to begin with a basic plan or at least proceed in a logical fashion and follow a planning outline over the course of a year or two. In that way, all participants will be on the same page and know what to expect in the course of planning for the future.

If a library board cannot afford the luxury of assembling a planning committee, then at the very least it should involve the library director, members of the staff, and invite governing officials, library volunteers, and patrons to public meetings. With a small library long-range planning might take place as part of quarterly or monthly board meetings; with a larger library the planning committee can make progress reports to the board more frequently.

The library today. To understand where the library needs to go, the board must know where the library stands today. It will need to analyze its strengths and weaknesses through focus group observations or a community needs assessment and then identify what needs to be improved, changed or eliminated. The board or planning committee will need to prioritize changes to be accomplished over time and dedicate resources to make these improvements happen.

First review the library's current mission and roles. This is always a good place to start because after the board writes the library's mission statement and selects certain service roles to support, it may be years before it is reviewed or updated. If a board originally decided to support children's services and ten years later there is a shift in demographics resulting in the community being predominantly inhabited by seniors and retired residents, the library really won't be serving its primary patrons if it continues to devote more resources to serving children. Alternatively, if the community profile now has significantly greater Spanish-speaking residents and the library has a limited collection of materials for them and no outreach programs inviting them to the library, it is missing the boat. Mission or vision statements need to be reviewed regularly to insure that the library maximizes its resources for appropriate audiences.

Understand the community. This topic is expanded below in Learning About Your Community. Suffice it to say that a library's mission and roles should not be changed until the board analyzes results from library surveys, focus group observations, or more formal community needs assessments. When the board sits down and reviews its current mission and

roles, members may know of changes in community demographics, local employment and business patterns, changes in circulation statistics, program attendance and/or patron interests that invalidate parts or all of the original mission statement. The results of a community needs assessment will direct the board to revise the mission statement and select roles that reflect what current residents want from library service.

Analyze the collection. The soul of every library is still its materials' collections, both print and non-print. Good public library collections are weeded regularly to remove dated, worn, or unused materials and replaced with items that reflect current interests of its patrons. It is interesting to note that many librarians have seen a decline in use of their print reference and certain non-fiction materials because of the immediate currency of information on the Internet. Many libraries subscribe to bestseller lease programs that provide sufficient copies of print or audio books to meet current demand. As demand for these items diminishes, they can be returned to the vendor thus freeing up valuable shelf space.

Another library trend in recent years is providing collections in other languages, most notably Spanish. Utah's Spanish-speaking population nearly doubled in the last decade of the 20th Century and is projected to continually increase in the 21st Century. Many public libraries have received federal LSTA grants to build collections in Spanish and develop outreach programs for their new patrons. Some libraries are also building collections in other ethnic languages as immigrants of other countries settle in Utah.

The librarian, who is responsible for maintaining a current collection of high interest materials for the community, will be able to report these new trends to the board and make recommendations in collection emphasis. Results of in-house or community surveys will also inform the board and the staff of possible overlooked collection interests that the library should be providing.

Assess programs and services. Most public libraries try to provide special programming for their patrons. Children's story hours and summer reading are two popular programs. Many libraries also offer a variety of adult programs either organized by their own staff and volunteers or through speaker services of the Utah Humanities Council.

If libraries have sufficient public meeting spaces, they may also provide special services such as outreach programs to Spanish-speaking groups, tax preparation assistance, blood pressure clinics, book club activities, Internet training, and the like. Again the results of the community needs assessment may reveal new ideas for library services and programming.

Review staffing needs. The Internet revolution over the past decade, while providing instant access to new worlds of information, has yet to diminish a librarian's workload. In fact, it has only compounded the work for everyone. The library staff has had to learn computer technology, cataloging and circulation programs, general software applications, and Internet navigation strategies, and then train their patrons in much of the same. And while library circulation has increased, public Internet demand has grown so much that even the smallest of public libraries now has multiple public access stations. Maintaining this equipment has

become a major responsibility for all libraries so that many must depend on their city or county information technologists to service or troubleshoot their equipment. Larger libraries now employ permanent full-time information technologists to manage all telecommunications infrastructures.

Libraries have extended their hours and added more staff to accommodate increased Internet access demand. While some libraries are fortunate to have sufficient staff and volunteers to meet increased public service demand, other libraries struggle with limited and untrained personnel. A community needs assessment should try to elicit information about patron satisfaction with current service and ideas for improvement. Library hours may need to be changed to respond to times when most working patrons can visit. This might even lead to Sunday afternoon hours for some libraries, a common practice in other states.

Examine the facility and its environment. In the past decade, many communities across the state have been fortunate to build new libraries to serve them for at least ten and maybe twenty years. However, a number of old Carnegie facilities with the ever-challenging front steps and basement bathrooms still exist, thereby denying access to the community's disabled patrons. Built in the early 20th Century, they were never meant to accommodate multiple computer stations, nor were they powered to do so. Librarians have had to rewire and rearrange their space for Internet access.

Nor were these libraries designed with public meeting rooms to hold children's or adult programs. Most have improvised and made space to accommodate program needs. And while the Carnegie library was usually built on spacious grounds, parking was limited to the street. No one could foresee how essential and pervasive automobiles would become and how inadequate the parking would be at these libraries. Carnegie libraries have had to make do.

Where public pressure and potential resources exist, hopes and plans for new buildings arise. It is the task of the building committee to engage the public in the process of planning a new library facility to insure the community gets the library it wants. A building program is a whole long-range plan in and of itself, and should be viewed and undertaken as a separate program.

Library facilities, whether new or old, will always need modifications to accommodate new resources, services, and programs. Like all public buildings, libraries require constant upkeep. Walls need repainting, worn carpets and furniture need replacing, roofs need repair, shelving may need to be added, sidewalks and parking lots need resurfacing, furnaces and air conditioning systems will break down and require major repairs or replacement, and landscaping will always need attention. The list of expensive capital improvements goes on. In preparing a long range plan for the library the board would do well to prioritize capital improvement needs and tackle each project according to a predetermined schedule.

Appraise available resources. The board of trustees is charged with insuring that public funds to operate the library are expended wisely. Developing a long-range library plan will help the board, librarian, and staff achieve this end. Although it may take several meetings to determine

what changes need to be made in programs, services, or buildings and grounds, once these are prioritized in a long-range plan, the board can then allocate public funds to make improvements.

Funding deficiencies to cover needed improvements can be addressed through state, federal, and private grants and by fundraising activities conducted by library volunteers such as the Friends of the Library. By examining the library's current financial resources and exploring all possible future funding options, the board can identify which projects will be completed and in what year. If emergencies arise, then the plan can be altered and revised. It may just mean that some projects will be postponed to a future year.

Consider the library's image. Most people in the community will never know what the library has to offer them if they do not patronize it. That is why it is so important for the library to communicate its services, programs, and special events regularly through the local newspaper and media. Library staff should:

- Prepare press releases about children's story hour sessions and summer reading to reach parents of small children.
- Inform the community through radio or TV public service announcements of new books, books on tape, videos, CD ROMs, book talks, and author signing events to be held at the library.
- Promote Internet training sessions for residents without home access, or for computer challenged seniors, which will mend the digital divide in our communities.
- Analyze the library's current public relations practices and look for ways of improving the message and delivery.
- Publicize recent library improvements immediately and listen to the public's reactions.
- Although this is a major responsibility of the librarian and staff, the board should also promote the library within the community whenever it can. The board should know what will be publicized and offer suggestions to the librarian to reach influential members in the community as well.

Visit other libraries and steal their best practices. Whether before, during, or after the planning process, a library board would do well to take a few field trips to other libraries known for outstanding service and programs. Libraries should not hesitate to copy best practices from each other. They can only provide better service by doing so.

Learning About Your Community

Communities have been compared to living organisms moving through life changes like people: birth and early development, adolescence, maturity, old age, decline, and even death. Communities, like people, respond to changes in the environment, population, economics, government, and even national priorities. Some people may recall the time fifty years ago when many rural communities in the country's heartland suddenly declined economically due to the

building of the national interstate highway system. Small towns that had derived their economic viability from people in surrounding areas were now bypassed by these same people venturing farther and faster to larger cities for more selection and competitive prices, extended employment opportunities, and more variety in recreational activities.

Many towns died for other reasons. Agricultural efficiency consolidated the country's farms into big agribusinesses, employing fewer people. Some towns were devastated as industries shut down or moved out of the country. Later some communities were reborn or reshaped by new recreation industries such as the ski resorts in the north or retirement communities in the Sun Belt. Information technology was also midwife to new communities in California, Washington, Texas, North Carolina, Massachusetts, and Utah.

Since public libraries are in the business of providing information to their residents, they have had to respond to many changes in their communities, keeping up with new and different demands for information and reaching out to new populations. One example occurred in the 1980's as libraries adopted new information technology with automated circulation and cataloging systems. Next they collected information in newer and newer formats: videos, music tapes, CD's, DVD's, books on tape, books on CD, and of course the most revolutionary of all, the Internet. Technology forced libraries to rethink their budget allocations, collection diversity, physical arrangements, electrical capacities, and response to the needs of different audiences.

Understanding how a community has changed over time is essential to library planning. A good way to learn about the current needs of a community is to study it through a planned needs assessment. An analysis of the community will reveal important changes that should inform the library director, staff, and trustees about what people need and expect from their public library. The library can then respond by redefining its mission and roles, reshaping its collection, services, and programs to more accurately match the current needs. A preliminary step to conducting a community needs assessment is developing a community profile.

The community profile. Developing a community profile means gathering specific information about a library's service area and the people it serves. Conducted every three to five years, it will reveal changes and new trends in people's lifestyles, interests, hobbies, family and business pursuits, recreational activities, and social, civic, and educational concerns and will help the library refocus its resources to provide what the community needs and expects. This information can illustrate a stage in the life of the town or community – if it is growing, stagnating, poised for a rebirth because of some outside force (new industries moving in, new populations), or if it will need to change drastically to remain viable and economically healthy. The planning committee needs to examine two major influences on the community: environment and population.

Community environment. The planning committee begins by gathering information about the community's social, political, economic, cultural, and physical environment.

- **Growth and development**. What is the historical growth pattern of the community? How has this changed in the last three to five years - fewer farms, more commercial businesses, or new industries? Is the population growing or declining? How has composition of the population changed (new ethnic groups or minorities)? Are new housing developments moving the center of the community's population? How does the library's location matter to changes in population? Have shopping patterns changed (new malls, etc. built away from downtown)? Is the library near current commercial, medical, educational, and cultural facilities?

- **Local government.** What are the political realities of the community? What is the relationship of the library to local government? How adequate is local funding for the library? Are current levels of local taxation sufficient? How does the library compare with those in similar sized communities? What is the library's management relationship with the board and with local government officials? How supportive is local government for library service, for funding needed technology and staff, and for capital improvements?

- **Business and industry.** A century ago agriculture, mining, and ranching determined the kinds of populations in most Utah communities. While all three industries still remain, the number of people employed by them has fallen drastically. What kinds of businesses and industries currently exist or are being seduced with tax incentives to locate in the community? How many people do they employ and what are the most common occupations today? How many people commute to other towns for work? Is your town developing a business and research park? How much agricultural land is being developed for shopping malls, commercial establishments, and new housing developments? What conditions would increase, or reduce tax revenue to local government (and eventually to the library)?

- **Communications.** Determining the number of residents with Internet access at home or work has implications for library services if the library allows for remote access to its website and its catalog, and allows people to renew items or place holds on materials over the Internet. This will impact future services as more libraries host their own websites. However, as more and more people connect to the Internet their access increases to global information resources. This may or may not reduce library visits. Many libraries have noticed a decline in the use of reference and non-fiction collections, as patrons prefer accessing the same information online.

- **Educational facilities.** Students of all ages are heavy users of public libraries, especially in small towns without alternative library resources. How adequate are the public school libraries? What other libraries in the community are available for students (such as colleges, universities, technical or vocational schools)? Has the library developed cooperative borrowing arrangements with these alternative resource libraries?
- **Geography, climate and recreation.** How does the state's geography and climate relate to its recreational and leisure potential and how does this affect library resources? Resort communities throughout the state are home to tourist populations that affect public library

patronage depending on the season. How much do these seasonal visitors affect collection development, programming, Internet use, and other information services in these communities?

- **Cultural opportunities.** Where communities provide a variety of cultural activities for their residents and have developed reputations for these activities, they compete with the library for people's leisure time. Conversely cultural events may increase the demand for materials and programming at the library. Undoubtedly, interest in Shakespeare's plays rises each summer in Cedar City, host to the Tony award-winning Utah Shakespearean Festival. Libraries that host author readings and book discussion groups also create demand for new materials. What are the traditional cultural programs and events in your community and how do they influence demand for library services?

- **Local organizations and civic groups.** Every community nurtures many non-profit social, civic, religious, service, and charitable organizations. How many of these groups use the library for meeting space? Does their organizational purpose influence the library's collection, service, or programming? Does the library attempt to reach the information needs of special target populations that these organizations serve? If not, then why not? Here is an opportunity to reach the non-user and the underserved populations in the community.

Population Characteristics For The Community Profile

Once the planning committee has evaluated the environmental areas of the community, the next step is to study its population characteristics. There are at least five groups of demographic data that should be considered in describing a library's community.

1. **Age.** State and local census data can break down the community's population by age. It is an important statistic because it may indicate how much use the library can expect from certain population groups. The size of the age group also influences the amount of information the library should collect for each group. The planning committee will want to know the number of people in certain age groups in the community to identify the largest groups expected to make demands on the library's resources. The library should be interested in serving the following major age groups for different reasons.

   - **Children and young adults.** This group (ages 0-17) represents early learners and students who need a variety of educational materials in several formats – books for appropriate age groups, computer learning games on CDs, music, computer software, and videos, along with adequate workstations for Internet access, etc. Resources need to be allocated for story time and young adult programming. The library has to determine its present and future demand from this age group to plan for collection, services, and programming.

- **Adults.** This category (ages 18-55) can be broken down by smaller age subunits that reflect life stages. Marital and family status, educational levels, occupational experiences as well as personal and leisure interests and recreational activities are also important. Demand for library services from subgroups in this category will vary, but it generally increases for those who graduate from high school.

- **Seniors.** If no longer in the workforce, this group (56 and over) has more leisure time to use library resources, volunteer, attend, and participate in special programs. Though formerly considered low users of library services, younger seniors are a healthier and more educated class today and continue life long learning pursuits that require information resources.

2. **Race and language.** Census data also exists for these categories. Ethnic minorities and immigrants have not been frequent users of the public library in the past. However, many libraries are actively building collections in other languages, especially for Hispanic and Asian residents and are providing outreach services to encourage them to become regular patrons. Utah's urban libraries dedicate many resources to serving their minority patrons. With LSTA grants several of the smaller rural libraries have been able to provide materials, bi-lingual story times, literacy classes, and other programs to their growing number of non-English-speaking patrons. The library should identify the various ethic populations in their community so they can make an effort to reach them with information they need to survive and participate as productive residents.

3. **Educational levels.** Educated populations generally use library services more than those with limited schooling. If the library knows the community's literacy rate, it can plan accordingly in working with existing literacy and ESL programs and provide appropriate low reading level, high interest materials for this population.

4. **Occupation and income levels.** Identify the major occupational categories in the community. What percentage of the population works in professions or holds managerial positions? What is the percentage of white collar employees to blue collar workers? How many women are homemakers? This data has implications for your collection, services, and programs.

5. **Household size.** With a birth rate twice the national average, family-sized Utah leads the nation in children per capita. While this fact presents a major challenge to the legislature and state educators, it also is the reason why families and children are the heaviest users of our public libraries. Most libraries in the state offer year round story times and annual summer reading programs that consume tremendous amounts of staff time and resources. Although a major portion of the collection may be devoted to materials for children, there is always a demand for more. Compounding this problem are the inadequate and outdated book collections in school libraries. While most librarians know that families are their heaviest users, they should also find out about other kinds of family units in their community. How many single families are there? How many households without children

are there? How many non-families are there with a householder living alone, and perhaps over 65? These groups have different information needs that the library must serve.

Armed with this information the planning committee is now prepared to develop and implement a formal needs assessment to elicit responses from the community about what their public library should be and provide for them.

The Library Needs Assessment & Patron Expectations

The preliminary steps in long range planning comprise elements of an on-going needs assessment to determine how well the library is serving its community. These steps included a careful analysis of the collections, services, and programs, assessment of personnel needs, evaluation of information technology and the physical facility, and the development of a current community profile to track changing demographics.

Obtaining Community Feedback. An important part of any needs assessment is to find out more precisely from patrons and others in the community what other resources and services they want, hope, and expect the library to provide. Their answers may further define:
- How extensively the library's collection is being used; what significant gaps exist;
- Who uses the library and ways to reach non-users;
- What are the most successful services and programs; what are the least successful;
- What improvements can be made; what new services should be provided;
- How adequate the facility and parking are;
- How changing local demographics impact the collection, services, and programs;
- What changes need to be made in staffing or library hours.

Asking the Right Questions. The planning committee may feel it has enough background data after completing all the preliminary needs assessment activities to decide what questions to ask people in the community. Committee members may also feel confident enough to develop or structure the questions themselves and interpret the results, or they may decide to hire an outside consultant, perhaps someone from the local college or a high school teacher with experience in survey design, implementation, and analysis. A consultant can be very useful in helping a planning committee interpret data from preliminary planning activities to designing the most appropriate questions for use in a community forum, user survey, focus group, or interviewing process. Experienced survey designers will be able to interpret the results with some degree of statistical significance or validity.

Getting the community to respond. The planning committee can select one or more of the following methods to elicit responses from the community.
- Community Forum:

Advantages. This is an interactive group event that can involve wide representation of community members, from key community leaders to regular library users. The board chair or a member of the planning committee should facilitate the review of the issues and question session. Forums can elicit a lot of good information. They also add visibility to the library as a vital community asset.

Disadvantages. A forum requires a lot of planning and publicity and can be difficult to schedule to insure healthy attendance. Forums usually don't attract the non-users. Responses will be subjective and may over-represent local special interests.

- Focus Groups:

  Advantages. Focus groups can elicit candid and productive responses. Members can be pre-selected by age, gender, occupation, professional, or personal interests and groups can be organized by best mix.

  Disadvantages. Works best with experienced facilitators, still subjective, and time consuming to organize, and schedule the participants.

- User surveys (In-house, mail, phone, web):

  Advantages. Anonymous, broad-based, can be inexpensive, efficient use of time. Ask local utilities to include the survey in one of their billings or have a scout troop deliver and wait for the survey to be completed (this works for small towns).

  Disadvantages. Most people hate to fill out surveys, especially if they are long, unless they have a commitment to the purpose. Web surveys need to be designed so the person logging in has the option to fill out the survey and is not required to do so before accessing information.

- Interviews with community leaders (educators, public officials, business representatives, clergy):

  Advantages. Results in more in-depth responses by experienced and educated professionals that already support the library and have the respect of the community.

  Disadvantages. Subjective responses, time consuming. Singing to the choir.

Using community feedback. When the results are in and the planning committee has evaluated them, they can use them to:

- Rank responses in order of priority, obtain board consensus, and allocate the budget accordingly;
- Revise the library's mission, goals, and objectives for the next three years;
- Share the results with the community. It is good public relations to publicize the results in the local media and describe how the community responses will shape the library's long-range plan for collection development, services, and programs.

Ready To Plan (Or Not)

All of the preceding information is intended to encourage librarians to think about long range planning for their library. It describes the benefits in planning longer term; who should be involved; preliminary steps in analyzing current library collections, programs, services;

reviewing the internal and external environments; developing a community profile; conducting a community needs assessment and interpreting the results.

One unique section briefly reviewed incorporated outcome-based evaluation (OBE) into library planning. This strategy fosters more critical thinking early on in planning programs, activities, and services and informs the library (and community) in measurable terms the impact on patrons. As librarians become more familiar adapting OBE principles to their LSTA grant projects, they will be urged to apply the same evaluating skills to one or two of their library programs or services.

The goal of all this information gathering and investigative activity is to help librarians, the staff, board, and supporters understand more accurately what resources and services their community expects from the library. Once this information is known, then the library can plan to deliver what the customer really wants.

Most librarians are now fairly confident preparing annual plans. Many have also successfully produced a three-year technology plan for the FCC E-Rate Discount program or for an LSTA grant. The next step is for libraries to expand their library plan to three years and incorporate their technology plan into it. To make this endeavor seem less intimidating, librarians should think of it as a formatting stretch. With all the tools described above, the librarian and the board will be working to identify and prioritize those activities or services to be accomplished in the first, second, and third year. Librarians and their boards will evaluate what they accomplished in the first year of the plan, and submit an evaluation report along with a revised plan for the next two years to the State Library. At the end of the third year, librarians and their boards would develop another three-year plan and continue the process as before. It can be that simple.

Appendices

Appendix A

Library Three-Year Planning Template

Public libraries submitting three-year plans may adapt the following outline to meet their own needs. Some libraries may need to conform to local city or county planning guidelines and follow a different template. They may submit that plan instead.

The planning focus topics identified below in Section II may be expanded or not addressed depending on the needs of the library. Libraries are encouraged to individualize this template as they see fit and be as creative and unique as they desire.

I.   Introduction:

- **Community Profile** (Brief description about the library's community or a summary of a recent community profile that includes information about the following)
    - Community setting: environment, geography, climate, and recreational opportunities
    - Growth and development
    - Local government
    - Business and industry
    - Communications
    - Educational facilities
    - Cultural opportunities
    - Local organizations and civic groups
    - Population characteristics (age groups, race and language, educational levels, occupation and income levels, household size

- **Community Needs** (Brief description of current and future library needs obtained from a recent community needs assessment; from information gathered from informal patron surveys, focus groups, interviews, or public forums, or identified by the board and library as long term goals). The following represent possible needs that a library might wish to plan long-range.
    - New or remodeled facility, with expanded parking
    - Additional or upgraded technology
    - Service to new population groups
    - New or additional children's or adult programming
    - Public relations/fund-raising campaigns

- **Mission Statement**
    - Brief, but powerful description of the library's purpose and its key service roles
    - Supports agreement of library's purpose with its philosophy
    - Informs both library personnel and patrons about service emphasis

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- Helps the library board set priorities
- Provides basis for evaluating services, using performance measures
- Serves as a means for the director, board, and community to discuss the roles and activities of the library

- **Library Roles**
  - Libraries are encouraged to choose the roles their community supports for them
  - Libraries may select formally established roles or develop their own
  - Formally recognized library roles as defined by the UPGRADE Process: *
    - Popular Library
    - Community Activity Center
    - Reference Library
    - Community Information Center
    - Research Center
    - Children's Door to Learning
    - Formal Education Support Center
    - Independent Learning Center
  - Updated roles defined as Library Service Responses: **
    - Basic Literacy
    - Business and Career Information
    - Commons
    - Community Referral
    - Consumer Information
    - Cultural Awareness
    - Current Topics and Titles
    - Formal Learning Support
    - General Information
    - Government Information
    - Information Literacy
    - Lifelong Learning
    - Local History and Genealogy

II. Goals & Objectives/2004-2006

Include Goals & Objectives for all areas that apply. Topics listed under Planning Focus are suggested goals for libraries. Develop tasks and activities for objectives, assign to staff members, and indicate deadline to be accomplished. Select evaluation method and determine data collection to support evaluation activities.

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*"Chapter IV, The Planning Process", *The Upgrade Process: Planning, Evaluating, and Measuring for Excellence in Public Library Service.* Salt Lake City, UT, Utah State Library Division, 1987.
**Nelson, Sandra S. *The New Planning for Results: a Streamlined Approach.* Chicago, IL: Public Library Association, 2001.

A SUGGESTED FORMAT

PLANNING FOCUS	Year 1 Goals & Objectives	Evaluation of Year 1 & Revised Plan for years 2 & 3	Year 2 Goals & Objectives	Evaluation of Year 2 & Revised Plan for year 3	Year 3 Goals & Objectives	Evaluation of Year 3 & Revised Plan for the next 3 years
Identify policy, issue, service, resource, to be reviewed and improved	Goal #1: Objective: Tasks/Activities: Who: When:	Method: Measures: (Results) Outputs: Outcomes:	Goal #1: Objective: Tasks/Activities: Who: When:	Method: Measures: (Results) Outputs: Outcomes:	Goal #1: Objective: Tasks/Activities: Who: When:	Method: Measures: (Results) Outputs: Outcomes:
Identify policy, issue, service, resource, to be reviewed and improved	Goal #2: Objective: Tasks/Activities: Who: When:	Method: Measures: (Results) Outputs: Outcomes:	Goal #2: Objective: Tasks/Activities: Who: When:	Method: Measures: (Results) Outputs: Outcomes:	Goal #2: Objective: Tasks/Activities: Who: When:	Method: Measures: (Results) Outputs: Outcomes:
Identify policy, issue, service, resource, to be reviewed and improved	Goal #3: Objective: Tasks/Activities: Who: When:	Method: Measures: (Results) Outputs: Outcomes:	Goal #3: Objective: Tasks/Activities: Who: When:	Method: Measures: (Results) Outputs: Outcomes:	Goal #3: Objective: Tasks/Activities: Who: When:	Method: Measures: (Results) Outputs: Outcomes:

Planning Focus Suggestions:

Policy Development & Review
- Policy review schedule
- Implications for new services
- Other

Budget & Fundraising
- Board advocacy plans for increasing local government funds for specific library purposes (increased costs for extending hours, book budget, operations, and maintenance)
- Friends of the Library book sales, home & garden tours, community silent auction, social events, and dinners
- State, federal, corporate grant opportunities

Facility (Building, Equipment & Grounds)
- Provide an attractive, clean, and inviting library for the community
- Interior – shelving, carpeting, furniture, signage, electrical capacity, HVAC systems, ADA accessible restrooms, public rooms, security system
- Exterior – ADA accessible entrance, roofing, windows, insulation, parking, outdoor lighting, security system, landscaping

Collections
- Maintain balanced, current, and accessible print and non-print collections comprised of fiction, non-fiction, children's, YA, reference, local history, periodicals, Hispanic and other non-English materials, career information, etc.
- Automated catalog, circulation, acquisition systems, OCLC access
- Pioneer database access
- Weeding schedule
- Collection building needs
- Best sellers rental programs
- Collection merchandising
- Special collections
- Other

Services
- Home web access to catalog (for renewals, holds, overdue email notification)
- Interlibrary loan
- Reader's advisory
- Photocopying
- Word processing, other software applications
- Homework center

- Outreach to local businesses, pre-schools, senior centers, care facilities, county/city jails, home-bound
- Tax forms /volunteer assistance
- Book drop
- Other

Programming
- Literacy classes
- English and bilingual story times, summer reading program
- Adult humanities series
- Book talks and author book signings
- Book clubs
- Other

Technology
- Goals & strategy for the library's technology infrastructure
- Technology training strategy for staff
- Current technology assessment/inventory
- Budget
- Evaluation process for assessing current technology
- Three-year schedule

Personnel
- Library's staffing needs
- Staff training needs & opportunities – sponsored by local government, BCR, State Library Division workshops (UPLIFT), ULA
- Train volunteers, foster and support an active Friends of the Library

Public Relations
- Communication with local governing bodies, invitations to local officials to visit the library, attend board meetings, etc.
- Collaboration with local schools, public and non-profit organizations
- Publication of a monthly library newsletter, updated on the library's website
- On-going media (newspaper, radio, tv) announcements promoting library services, programs, events (ALA National Library Week, Library Sign-up Week), literary events, open houses

Library Resource, Service and Program Evaluation Tools & Schedule
- Library performance measures (see *Utah Public Library Service, 2001*, publication)
- In-house surveys
- Customer satisfaction questionnaires / surveys distributed through utility bills
- Suggestion box
- Focus groups

- Community forums
- Needs Assessment
- Community profile
- Other

III.   Programs/Services Selected For Outcome-Based Evaluation
(Suggested Programs or Services)

Program/Service	You Did What?	For Whom?	For What Outcome or Benefit?	Output or Outcome Target
Improved Technology				
Technology Training for Patrons				
Literacy Services				
Programs for Special Populations				
Adult Programming				
Other Programs or Services				

IV.   Acknowledgments (Optional, include only relevant participant categories)

- Library Board and Staff

- Long-Range Planning Committee

- Consultants

- Community Representatives

- Work Group Participants

- Program and Services/Technology

- Finance and Facilities

- Community Relations and Human Resources

Appendix B

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Web sites:

Adult Education Statistics: www.usoe.k12.ut.us/edulted.Stats.htm
http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/adulted/Stats.htm

Community Analysis Resources on the WWW:
www.lrs.org/html/topics&tools/community_analysis_web.html

Library Surveys on the Internet: http://web.syr.edu/~jryan/infopro/survey.html

National Center for Education Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/

Outcomes-based Evaluation: http://www.imls.gov/grants/current/crnt_outcomes.htm

Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics: http://www.bls.gov/lau/

Utah Demographics: http://www.governor.state.ut.us/dea/Demographics/demographics.html

Utah State Library Division, Long-range Planning information:
http://library.utah.gov/longrangeplan.html

U.S. Census: http://www.census.gov
   American Factfinder: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet
   State & County Quick Facts: http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/